

C

RESIGNATION

971.06
.H38.3

P971.03.54

OF THE

CANADIAN MINISTRY

IN

SEPTEMBER, 1854.

SPEECH OF THE HONORABLE INSPECTOR GENERAL HINCKS IN THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY, ON FRIDAY, THE 8TH SEPTEMBER.

QUEBEC.

~~1853~~
1854

RECEIVED

957565

3294



JUL 7 1934

A
IN
Spe
post
it is
know
duty
the
our
His
that
point
a few
to ou
I s
to an
tion
to be
after
had
have
the

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY,

Friday, Sept. 8th, 1854.

RESIGNATION OF THE MINISTRY.

After the presentation and reading of sundry petitions,

INSPECTOR GENERAL HINCKS rose and said, Mr. Speaker, I am about to move that the Orders of the Day be postponed until Monday next, and in submitting that motion, it is my duty to state to the House, what is probably already known to a great many honorable gentlemen,—that I felt it my duty this day, in conjunction with my honorable colleague, the Commissioner of Crown Lands, (Mr. Morin,) to tender our resignation to His Excellency the Governor General, that His Excellency has been pleased to accept our resignation, and that we now only hold office until our successors shall be appointed. I desire, Sir, to trespass on the time of the House for a few moments while I briefly assign the reasons that have led to our taking this step.

I shall not, Sir, go back—for I deem it unnecessary to do so—to any matters connected with the formation of the administration that preceded the present one, and of which I had the honor to be a member. But I shall content myself with stating that after that administration had been some time in office, after we had carried, by very considerable majorities, measures which have been received, I believe, with very great satisfaction by the country at large—measures that we shall always be proud

to have our names identified with, and to which, as they are recorded on the Statute Book of the Country, I do not think it necessary to refer more particularly at present—during the Session of 1851 we had such evidence of the disorganization of the party in Upper Canada by whose support and confidence we had been enabled to conduct the affairs of the Province, that at a late period of that Session, my honorable and learned friend, the then Attorney General for Upper Canada, (Mr. Baldwin) was under the necessity of tendering his resignation. I was then, as Mr. Baldwin has since felt it necessary to explain, although it was not made public at the time, most anxious to retire with him from the Government. Mr. Baldwin strongly urged upon me the importance for the interests of the great party with which I have the honor of being connected, of not taking that step. He conceived that the measure on which the Government had, so far as Upper Canada was concerned, been defeated by a very large majority, was one with which he, as Attorney-General of the Province, was more particularly identified, and for which he was more especially responsible, and he did not think that I should be justified in tendering my resignation at that time. It is perfectly well known that the honorable and learned gentleman who is the present Chief Justice of Lower Canada (Mr. Lafontaine), and who had been the leader of the administration for his section of the Province, and in reference to whom it is unnecessary for me to say now, for I have often had an opportunity of doing so before, that I have always looked up to him with the highest respect and admiration, had then announced his intention of withdrawing at the close of that Parliament from public life altogether. Under these circumstances, we felt that the best course we could pursue was to endeavor to carry on the public business of the country during the few days that had to elapse before the close of the session, and to resign at the earliest moment that His Excellency could have an opportunity of forming a new administration. When my honorable and learned friend, Mr. Lafon-

taine, tendered his resignation, His Excellency the Governor General did me the honor to send for me in conjunction with my honorable friend the Commissioner of Crown Lands (Mr. Morin), to consult with us in regard to the formation of a new administration. Upon one point my honorable friend and I have always been agreed, and that is, that it is most important to the interests of this country that the administration should, if possible, command the confidence of both sections of the Province (hear, hear.) I do not mean to say that it is always possible, but I think every honorable member will admit that it is, at all events, exceedingly desirable. (Hear, hear.) I felt at that time that I could, in conjunction with my honorable and learned friend, form an administration which would command the general confidence of the country.

It is my particular desire on the present occasion, in making this short statement of facts, to avoid any thing at all like controversy. I will not therefore refer to certain charges made in regard to combinations, more particularly by the honorable member for Lambton (Mr. Brown,) but I shall take an opportunity on some other occasion of vindicating the course I followed at that period. It is sufficient for me now to say that I felt at that time that it was exceedingly desirable, with a view to preserve the integrity of the Reform party in Upper Canada with which I had always been identified, to seek for the support of those who enjoyed the confidence of that section of the party which had for some time been in strong opposition to the administration of which I had been a member, if it could be done without any compromise of principle on my part. I avail myself of this opportunity of referring publicly to the most important circumstance in connection with the formation of that administration and which perhaps led to the difficulties which have existed and which are existing even at this moment. I desire now to state what were my views at the time that administration was formed. While I was most anxious as a member of the Re-

form party to use my utmost exertions to bring to the support of the Government the assistance of gentlemen commanding the confidence of that section of the party which had opposed me, I felt that I should be dishonored as a public man if I did so by the sacrifice of those men who had faithfully adhered to the administration of which I had been a member, and who had at all times consistently supported Mr. Baldwin and myself when in office. Prominent among the gentlemen who stood in that position was my honorable and learned friend, Mr. Justice Richards, then member of Parliament for the County of Leeds. Mr. Richards had always given a cordial and consistent support to our Government. I felt that if, in conjunction with my honorable friend Mr. Morris, the Speaker of the Legislative Council, and the honorable member for Glengary (Mr. McDonald), who was then Solicitor General, I had invited Gentlemen belonging to what might be called the Opposition into our Government, and had entirely excluded Gentlemen who had always adhered to us, on the plea of maintaining the integrity of the party, my character as a public man would have been compromised. Well, Sir, I opened negotiations with a view to the formation of an administration. Prior to that I believe a great deal of conversation had taken place with regard to the manner in which that administration was to be formed. The honorable and learned member for Glengary will allow me to say, without meaning any reproach, that I believe he is rather fond of making combinations before being properly authorized to do so (hear, hear). At all events, it had been industriously given out, although perhaps not by him, that my honorable friend, Mr. Cameron, the present Post Master General, was to be a member of the administration as well as my honorable and venerable friend the member for Norfolk, Dr. Rolph, and such was the public expectation. I invited the honorable member for Norfolk to join the administration and assist in carrying it on, informing him at the time of doing so, that it was

my intention to offer the Attorney Generalship for Upper Canada to Mr. Richards. The honorable member, after some correspondence, did the only thing he could honorably have done under the circumstances: he said he could not accept office without the assistance in the administration of Mr. Cameron. The honorable Member for Glengary at that juncture had refused to accept the Office of Commissioner of Crown Lands which was offered him, and I was thus enabled to do what I could not otherwise have done—place a department at the disposal of Mr. Cameron. The administration was then formed which has with slight modification continued to the present time. We have carried through a number of measures. I will not refer to them at all in detail, because, as I said in reference to the measures of the preceding administration, they are upon the face of the Book of the country, and I am quite willing that the country shall judge whether they have been measures of progress and generally acceptable to the people. The administration was opposed, I believe at the very outset, in the most strenuous manner by the Honorable member for Lambton (Mr. Brown) who had been a distinguished member of the liberal party, and in adverting to the Honorable Gentleman, I must do him the justice to say that there is one thing I like about him, and it is that he has always been straight forward in his opposition, (Hear, hear). There is no misunderstanding *him* at all events. He took his course—he was determined to destroy the Government, (Mr. BROWN, hear, hear). I wish not to disparage my opponents. I wish to believe that the course they take is the one which they consider best calculated to promote the interests of the country. I am willing to give the honorable member for Lambton the same credit which I trust he would accord to me. I am willing to believe that he thought he would promote the best interests of the country by obstructing the progress of the Administration. He at all events took that course at the beginning and has persevered in it ever since. Well, Sir, by degrees an opposition sprang up in the ranks of the Liberal Party, and the result was

that at the last Session of Parliament, the dissaffection was so great that the Administration was left in a minority.

Now what I more particularly desire to call the attention of the House to is this—that throughout all these proceedings my honorable and learned friend beside me (Mr. Morin) has received a cordial support from a parliamentary majority from Lower Canada (hear, hear,) not composed of men of any particular origin; for I am sure my honorable friend knows as well as I do, that some of our firmest and most unwavering supporters from Lower Canada have been of English origin, and we feel towards them the same affection and gratitude that we do for all our other supporters. (Hear, hear.) My honorable friend has throughout received a cordial support from his friends, and I may be permitted to say, now when we have gone out of office, and are little likely again to return to power, that no man in this House better deserves such support than my honorable friend (hear, hear). Of him and his colleagues from Lower Canada I can hardly trust myself to speak lest my feelings should overpower me in attempting to express my esteem for them. They have throughout received that cordial and unwavering support without which, I maintain, it is utterly impossible for any Government to carry on the business of this or any other country. When Parliament met some months ago, it was evident that there was a very strong opposition to the administration from Upper Canada. That opposition proceeded from various causes and from different sections. A majority of the House having concurred in a vote which we considered as equivalent to a vote of want of confidence, we believed it to be our duty, in the interest of the party with which we were connected, and to secure the carrying out of the great measures before the country, to advise His Excellency the Governor General to dissolve the existing Parliament with a view to an appeal to the people.

Mr. Speaker, I shall never regret that course. It was taken with a great deal of deliberation. The policy which

to some extent caused the necessity of that dissolution—the policy of postponing the settlement of the great questions then pending with regard to the Clergy Reserves and the Seigniorial Tenure until a new parliament should be elected, is one which I am perfectly certain the public opinion of this country will sustain when all the present contentions are over, and I believe that nothing will have a greater tendency to secure a satisfactory adjustment of those questions than the course of the administration at that time. The dissolution of Parliament took place. The result was precisely what we had anticipated. A very large majority of the members elected were in favor of those measures and especially of the one in relation to the Clergy Reserves which was brought most prominently before the country. His Excellency has been advised to state in the speech from the throne that the opinion of the country has been expressed upon that question in no equivocal terms. I am sure honorable members on all sides of the house will admit that there can be no doubt about that. Well, Sir, we met Parliament; up to that time we had every reason to believe that the government would be sustained. The first question which arose, as a matter of course, was the election of a Speaker. I may be permitted to say, now that it is all over, that I had a very strong opinion upon that subject, and I shall state that opinion without any reservation. That opinion was that if we were beaten on the Speakership, the Government could not last a week. I say this because certain Members of this House professing to be friends of the Administration but who pride themselves on not being “party men,” thought the question of the Speakership one of no importance whatever to the country, and determined to vote for whoever they pleased. Well, the election for Speaker took place, and the Government was beaten by a majority of three. From the time that division took place we have had indications every day—aye every hour, that gentlemen whom we had reason to expect were friends of the Administration did not intend to support it.

(Hear, hear.) In reference to the Speakership, I must mention that the Government Candidate for that office was supported by a very fair majority from Lower Canada. (Hear, hear.) My honorable friend from Verchères (Mr. Cartier), the defeated candidate for Speaker, has, at all events, the satisfaction of knowing that the Representatives of Lower Canada, where he is best known, gave him a good majority of votes (Ministerial Cheers). But the Administration was defeated on the Speakership by a majority of 12 from Upper Canada. Honorable members who understand the position of public men will believe that this was a cause of very great embarrassment to me in the position that I occupied. In endeavoring to sustain my honorable colleague (Mr. Morin), I expected to be able to bring to his support the confidence of a majority of the Representatives of that portion of the Province to which I more particularly belong, so as to enable us conjointly to carry on the Government. The vote on the Speakership plainly indicated that I should not be able to do that. Immediately after that vote I fully made up my mind that it was utterly impossible for me to continue to conduct the government of the country with any sort of satisfaction, even if we should happen to have a majority on the Address in answer to the Speech from the Throne. I was perfectly certain that the majority, if any, could not be more than two or three, and that there would be a majority against us from Upper Canada. I felt that I should not be justified in remaining in an Administration with my Colleagues from Lower Canada when I could not command the confidence of the section of the Province to which I belong. I determined however to let the debate on the address come on in the House and be carried to a vote and then take my own course afterwards. But yesterday evening a question of privilege affecting the seat of an Hon. Member of this House came up unexpectedly by me. Some gentlemen may not regard it as a question of very material importance, but I and my honorable Colleagues take a different view of the subject. For myself I can only say that

I did not know until I came into the House yesterday evening that such a question was likely to arise. I found that the honorable Attorney General for Lower Canada wished to have twenty-four hours to consider the course that should be taken in regard to it. I certainly do not think the demand was an unreasonable one (Hear, hear). I think it desirable that before action is taken upon such questions some time should be allowed for consideration. However the Government was unable to get a postponement of the question and we were exposed to taunts of which I do not complain, for they were well deserved and well applied. We were told by the honorable and learned member for Toronto (Mr. Cameron), that we were placed in a position where important proceedings were going on and we were not able to direct them. This was true and we were certainly placed in a very embarrassing position. Feeling this strongly, I considered it my duty not to lose any further time in pursuing the course which I had determined on. Accordingly I communicated in the course of the debate last night, with my honorable friend (Mr. Morin) and told him that it was my determination to tender my resignation. My Honorable Colleague, feeling, I am sure, that the course I proposed to take was a proper one, under the circumstances, joined with me in it. This morning we tendered our resignations to His Excellency and those Resignations as I have already informed the House have been accepted.

Mr. Speaker, there is one other point which I must crave the indulgence of the House to allude to. In the course of discussions here and elsewhere certain charges personal to myself have been made. I do trust Honorable Gentlemen opposite will do me the justice to believe that I have no desire to avoid a full investigation into those charges. (Hear hear) I stated during the late session that it was my anxious desire that such an investigation should take place, (Mr. MACKENZIE hear, hear.) I am anxious now that it shall take place. I am anxious

to submit to the judgment of the House any charges that can possibly be brought against me (Mr. MACKENZIE Hear, hear). With regard to the attacks which have been made upon me and which I do not desire now to characterize, all that I have to say is, that I can afford to forgive the authors of them. (Loud cries of hear, hear.) When I hear the honorable gentleman opposite (Mr. Mackenzie) cry "hear, hear" I cannot help being reminded of one fact at all events that will be a consolation to me whatever may happen hereafter. That honorable gentleman who cries "hear, hear" threatened over and over again during the last session, as honorable gentlemen must well recollect, that he would turn me out of the County of Oxford. (Loud cries of hear, hear.) He told the House again and again that it was through his influence that I sat as the member for the County of Oxford. (Renewed cries of hear, hear.)

MR. MACKENZIE, no, no.

The INSPECTOR GENERAL I say yes, yes. The honorable member came up to the County of Oxford with which I had been connected for many years, and the confidence of the people of which I had received many proofs of possessing. He came to my meetings. He advanced all his charges. He spoke for hours on various occasions. He circulated all kinds of handbills, *Message* extras, *Globe* extras, *Examiner* extras, *North American* extras and how many votes did his candidate get? (Loud cries of hear, hear.) Why just 23! (Renewed cries of "hear, hear" from both sides of the House), and I was elected by a majority of above 350, a larger majority than I had ever received before. (Loud cheers) And not only that, but I had the gratification of being also returned for the County of Renfrew, a County into which I had never been, where I had never solicited a vote, and into which I did not enter during the election, (renewed cheers.) I shall conclude—only occupying the time of the House to read an extract from a speech of the late lamented Sir Robert Peel, which I feel is not inapplicable to my situation.

" They (the ministry) felt that being in possession of the entire
 " confidence of the King, and having received from His Majesty
 " the most cordial and unremitting support—looking to the pre-
 " sent position of affairs and the present state of political par-
 " ties—looking to the strength not only the numerical but the
 " moral strength of that great party, by which they had had the
 " honor of being supported, they felt it was their duty, under
 " existing circumstances, to continue the attempt of adminis-
 " tering public affairs, as responsible advisers of the Crown to
 " the latest moment that was consistent with the interests of the
 " public service, and with the honor and character of public men.
 " (Cheers.) When he did not hesitate to avow the reluctance
 " with which they had tendered their resignations, he believed
 " he should have credit (much cheering, both sides the House)
 " that that reluctance arose from public considerations alone
 " (renewed cheering), and was wholly unconnected with every-
 " thing of a personal nature. (Hear, hear, and much cheering,
 " particularly from the opposition.) He had a strong impression,
 " that when a public man at a crisis of great importance under-
 " took the public task of administering the affairs of the country
 " he incurred an obligation to persevere in the administration
 " of those affairs, as long as it was possible to do so consistently
 " with his honor. (Hear, hear.) No indifference to public
 " life, no disgust with the labors which it imposed, no per-
 " sonal mortifications, no deference to private feeling could
 " sanction a public man in withdrawing on light grounds from
 " the post in which the confidence of his Sovereign had placed
 " him (Much cheering.) But at the same time there was
 " an evil in exhibiting to the country, a want on the part of
 " the government, of that support in the House of Commons
 " which could enable it satisfactorily to conduct the public
 " affairs and which could enable it to exercise a control
 " over the proceedings of the House, a legitimate and
 " necessary control conferred upon it by the possession
 " of confidence (Hear, hear.) There was an evil in

"such an exhibition of weakness to which limits must be
 "placed, and he must say in reviewing all that had oc-
 "curred since the commencement of the session—looking to
 "the little progress the government had been able to make in
 "the business of the country—looking at what had occurred
 "on each of the last four nights, to the fact that ministers had
 "on each of the four nights to be left in a minority, consider-
 "ing that that minority was smaller in relation to the majority
 "than the minorities they had been in at the commencement of
 "the session—adverting also to the fact that they had received
 "the support of those who, not having general and unlimited
 "confidence in the government, yet had given to the govern-
 "ment a cordial and honorable support (cheers) on every oc-
 "casion in which it was consistent with their public prin-
 "ciples to give it—adverting to all these considerations he
 "must say that, in his opinion, the time was come when it was
 "incumbent on ministers of the Crown to withdraw from the
 "responsibilities which office under such circumstances im-
 "posed on them."

I desire to add nothing, continued Mr. Hincks, to these remarks of Sir Robert Peel.

Nor shall I trespass much longer on the time of the house.
 Having tendered my resignation I am now like any other
 member upon this floor, and know nothing at all of what is
 going forward. But I desire to say that at this crisis in the
 affairs of the country—and I look upon it as an important
 crisis—I do trust public men will be influenced, not by selfish
 considerations, but by a patriotic desire to carry out those
 great measures which the interests of the country demand
 (hear hear). For my own part, for the present at all events,
 I am desirous of taking my seat by my honorable friend
 the member for the County of Lincoln (Mr. Merritt), who has
 been described rather wittily by a newspaper in the City
 of Toronto as a "governmental impossibility" (Laughter.)
 In thus retiring from Official life, it would of course be absurd

for me to say that I have no enemies ; for I am under the impression that I have a great many. But it is most gratifying to me to know that at all events, I have a great many friends (hear, hear,) and they are not altogether confined to my own county, where the honorable member for Lambton stated that I owed my election altogether to my success in making friends. I have the satisfaction of feeling that in this House a very large number of the members have honored me with their personal friendship (Hear, hear.) I am referring at this moment more particularly to those with whom I have acted in public life. I feel more especially grateful for the support they have given me, but I do trust that there are a great many also in the ranks of the opposition with whom I am on terms of friendship and with whom I shall at all events be able to continue on those terms when I no longer occupy a seat upon these benches. (Hear, hear, and cheers.) I now move that the orders of the day be postponed until Monday next.

The motion was agreed to, and then on motion by Mr. HINCKS, the House adjourned until Monday.